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SENSITIVE  
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SCA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [AMGT](#) [HR](#) [OIG](#) [IN](#)  
SUBJECT: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NEEDED TO COVER THE BIGGEST  
ELECTION IN THE HISTORY OF THE PLANET

[1](#)1. (U) Action Request -- Paragraph 1.

Summary and Action Request

[1](#)2. (U) Mission India urges the Department to make available approximately \$72,000 in additional travel funds as well as four to six additional TDY reporting officers for a period of two to four months for coverage of the Indian national election, due before May 2009. The additional resources will enable Mission India to enhance the quality and breadth of our coverage of this massive -- 675 million voters -- election, one that has important implications for U.S.-India relations. The additional funds will allow officers to travel beyond Delhi's ring road and the cities where our consulates are based so that we can paint a discerning portrait of India's rich political landscape, particularly for officials of the incoming Administration. This portrait can then be used a baseline metric for future coverage of a country that will be a major international player in this century and one with which our strategic interests will increasingly coincide. Mission India has created a country-wide election coverage plan (please see para 6) deploying resources from Embassy New Delhi and consulates in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and Hyderabad for this vast democratic undertaking.

Why We Must Cover the Elections as Never Before

[1](#)3. (U) The U.S.-India bilateral relationship has transformed over the last decade, capped most recently by the signing of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Initiative on October 11. But this marks only the end of the beginning. It opens a new chapter in our relationship, one which has the potential to be among our most important international partnerships. Now more than ever, India engages the strategic interests of the U.S. in Asia and beyond. Based on our shared interests, common challenges and an increasingly convergent worldview, we have begun to more closely coordinate our foreign policies in many areas. Further, our coverage of the elections assumes greater significance because the Obama Administration will be assuming office in Washington just before the Indian elections take place. Our reporting and analysis will help new administration officials better understand the new globalized India they must deal with.

Why We Need More Resources to Get the Job Done

¶4. (SBU) The era of big tent politics in India is over. Globalization in the Indian political context means heightened political awareness and access to information through an explosive growth in media outlets. This has fed the rise of regional political parties which has in turn diminished the standing of the two traditional national parties, the Congress Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Political reporting means much more than simply talking to a handful of Congress Party and BJP bosses in New Delhi. In a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic society such as India, national elections are now won and lost on local issues in the country's 34 states and territories.

¶5. (SBU) In order to capture these political realities the USG must send officers frequently and far afield. However, Mission India has neither the personnel nor the travel funding to take on this substantial but temporary requirement. For example, Consulate General Kolkata has only one reporting officer who must cover 13 different states/territories with a combined population of 290 million (roughly equal to that of the U.S.). Besides election reporting, this officer is also responsible for all other reporting duties including economics, G/TIP, science and environment, and terrorism. In Delhi, one officer covers Uttar Pradesh, which at 180 million has a population on par with Brazil.

#### Travel Plan

NEW DELHI 00002942 002 OF 002

¶6. (U) Mission India has prepared a detailed travel plan to carry out election reporting. Below is a summary of the resources needed. For the full plan, please see the spreadsheet accompanying this cable. Dollar figures generally include airfare, per diem and M&IE for two people (one American and one LES) per trip.

State	Trips	Est. Cost
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¶1. Uttar Pradesh	3	6,400
¶2. Maharashtra	3	3,800
¶3. West Bengal	2	1,200
¶4. Andhra Pradesh	3	7,000
¶5. Bihar	3	4,800
¶6. Tamil Nadu	2	2,100
¶7. Madhya Pradesh	3	4,800
¶8. Karnataka	3	8,200
¶9. Gujarat	3	4,800
¶10. Rajasthan	3	4,800
¶11. Kerala	2	3,200
¶12. Punjab	2	3,200
¶13. Northeast	2	3,200
¶14. Orissa	2	3,200
¶15. Jharkhand	2	3,200
¶16. Chhattisgarh	2	3,200
¶17. Other	2	5,000
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Total		72,000

#### What the New Resources Will Buy Us

¶7. (U) The additional resources will be used to deploy reporting officers at least twice to the top twelve bellwether states, which together account for three quarters of the seats in parliament. We will be able to fully cover the run-up to elections, the campaign itself and voting on polling days. Reporting officers will profile 15-20 of the largest regional parties that are likely to be significant players in the new parliament. We will also be able to better analyze how the most important issues -- inflation, terrorism, Hindu nationalism, and the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Initiative -- are playing in different regions and

with different voter groups. And most importantly, we will be able to more thoroughly assess the election's implications for U.S.-India relations.

18. (U) In an assessment of the Global Repositioning Initiative, which benefited New Delhi, the Office of the Inspector General praised post's judicious use of limited resources, noting that the mission "has a political section ready and eager to carry out the outreach element of transformational diplomacy, but lacks the local staff and travel money necessary to support it." A one-time influx of travel funds and assistance to cover the 2009 elections would not resolve this underlying resource issue, but would serve to ameliorate it in a time of real mission need. TDY assistance could be sought from the Bureau and/or INR.

19. (U) The mission thanks the Department in advance for considering this request. We believe the additional resources will yield valuable benefits for USG interests for many years to come.

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